

### CURRENT CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 12, and 20 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A barrier for protecting an object from encroaching elements comprising:  
  
an organic bentonite-based material; ~~and~~  
  
an outer boundary surface disposed to retain the material in a selected location, the location at least partially surrounding the object; and  
  
wherein the organic bentonite-based material is disposed within the outer boundary surface such that a substantial portion of the material remains uncovered.
2. (Original) The barrier of claim 1, wherein the boundary surface comprises a retaining device configured to retain the material.
3. (Original) The barrier of claim 1, wherein the object comprises a pole.
4. (Original) The barrier of claim 3, wherein the material is disposed surrounding the base of the pole.
5. (Original) The barrier of claim 3, wherein the material is disposed around the pole extending outward from the pole a distance of between about 6 inches to about 10 feet.

6. (Original) The barrier of claim 3, wherein the material is disposed around the pole extending outward from the pole a distance of between about 2 inches and about 5 feet.
7. (Original) The barrier of claim 3, wherein the material is disposed around the pole extending outward from the pole a distance of about 3 feet.
8. (Original) The barrier of claim 3, wherein the material is disposed around the pole to a depth in the range of between about .25 inches and about 4 feet.
9. (Original) The barrier of claim 3, wherein the material is disposed around the pole to a depth in the range of between about 4 inches and about 2 feet.
10. (Original) The barrier of claim 3, wherein the material is disposed around the pole to a depth of about 8 inches.
11. (Original) The barrier of claim 1, wherein the boundary surface comprises a annular plastic sheet.
12. (Original) The barrier of claim 1, wherein the boundary surface comprises the edges of a depression.

13. (Currently Amended) A method for protecting an object, said method comprising:  
providing an outer boundary surface disposed to retain a material in a location, the location at least partially surrounding the object; and  
depositing an organic bentonite-based material within the outer boundary surface, a substantial portion of the bentonite-based material remaining exposed.
14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein providing an outer boundary surface comprises creating a depression about the object for holding the material.
15. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein providing an outer boundary surface comprises installing a circular plastic sheet configured to retain the material.
16. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein depositing the material further comprises depositing the material in a radius about the object.
17. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising depositing the material and forming an upward slope towards the object.
18. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein depositing the material further comprises pumping the material from a source.
19. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein depositing the material further comprises

pumping the material from the source.

20. (Currently Amended) A barrier for protecting an object from encroaching elements comprising:

~~a pole~~ an object;

an organic bentonite-based material;

an annular plastic sheet disposed to retain the material in a selected location, the location at least partially surrounding the object;

the material is disposed around the ~~pole~~ object, between the plastic sheet and the object  
such that a substantial portion of the material remains uncovered, and extending outward from  
the ~~pole~~ object a distance of about 3 feet ~~and~~ and

~~the material disposed around the pole~~ to a depth of about 8 inches.